

## REMARKS

This Reply to Final Office Action is responsive to the Final Office Action mailed on August 26, 2003. Claims 1-11 are pending in the present Application. Applicants have amended claims 1 and 7, canceled claim 11 and added claim 12. Accordingly, claims 1-10 and 12 are now at issue. Applicants' undersigned attorney appreciates the courtesies extended by Examiner Brittain during the telephonic interview on November 20, 2003.

Regarding the Examiner's drawing objections, Applicants have canceled claim 11. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the Examiner's drawing objections are now moot.

Regarding the Examiner's claim objections, Applicants have canceled claim 11, and amended claim 1 to clarify the invention. Claim 1 now recites "whereby after the engagement surface is deformed and elongated . . ." Accordingly, Applicants submit that the Examiner's claim objections have been overcome.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-11 under §103(a) as being unpatentable over *Kreiseder* (U.S. 4,236,280) in view of *Caveney, et al.* (U.S. 3,949,449). Applicants submit that claims 1-10 and 12, as amended, are patentable over the cited prior art.

Claim 1, as amended, recites "whereby after the engagement surface is deformed and elongated, the difference between the first predetermined height and the second predetermined height allows the engagement surface to pivot down into engagement with both the first group of teeth and the second group of teeth to prevent retrograde movement of both the first group of teeth and the second group of teeth, depending on whether the engagement surface is engaged with the first group of teeth or the second group of teeth . . ." As discussed with Examiner Brittain during the telephonic interview on November 20<sup>th</sup>, and as mentioned on page 5 of the Final Office Action, neither *Kreiseder* nor *Caveney* disclose, teach or suggest a locking wedge capable of locking

engagement with both the first and second groups of teeth to prevent retrograde movement of both the first and second groups of teeth, depending on whether the locking wedge is engaged with the first group of teeth or the second group of teeth.

As discussed in column 3, lines 53-57 of *Kreiseder*, retrogression or movement in a release direction is prevented because the abutting planar faces of the locking teeth 28 are in engagement with like cooperating surfaces on the selected cooperating teeth 20. However, *Kreiseder* does not disclose, teach or suggest that the locking teeth 28 engage teeth members or protuberances 18 to prevent retrograde movement of the teeth members or protuberances 18. Moreover, *Caveney* discloses pawl 150 engaging teeth 115. However, *Caveney* does not disclose, teach or suggest pawl 150 engaging gripping projections 108 to prevent retrograde movement of gripping projections 108. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claim 1, as amended, is patentable over the *Kreiseder* and *Caveney* combination. Claims 2-6 are asserted to be allowable based on their dependency from allowable claim 1.

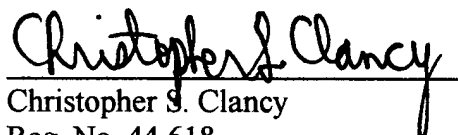
Claim 7, as amended, recites “whereby after the engagement surface is deformed and elongated, the difference between the first predetermined height and the second predetermined height allows the engagement surface to pivot down into engagement with both the first group of teeth and the second group of teeth to prevent retrograde movement of both the first group of teeth and the second group of teeth, depending on whether the engagement surface is engaged with the first group of teeth or the second group of teeth . . . ” For the reasons discussed above regarding independent claim 1, Applicants submit that claim 7, as amended, is patentable over the *Kreiseder* and *Caveney* combination. Claims 8-10 are asserted to be allowable based on their dependency from allowable claim 7.

New independent claim 12 recites "a pair of side rails having a height and extending longitudinally the length of the strap body, . . . the first predetermined height and the second predetermined height being less than the height of the side rails . . . " As shown in FIG. 2, and discussed in paragraph [0025], strap body 26 has a pair of side rails 32 extending longitudinally the length of strap body 26. Moreover, as best seen in FIG. 5 and discussed in paragraph [0027], the first group of teeth have peaks at a first predetermined height and the second group of teeth have peaks at a second predetermined height, and the first and second predetermined heights are below the side rails 32. Applicants submit that this limitation, combined with other limitations present in independent claim 12, is not disclosed, taught or suggested by the cited prior art. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claim 12 is patentable.

In view of the above, Applicants submit that claims 1-10 and 12 are allowable and favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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